

EXHIBIT #3
DATE Jan 31st
255

January 31, 2011

HB255: Designating March 30 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day
Introduced by: F Wilmer

I am neutral on whether this bill goes forward, but have a few comments.

First of all, while I may not support US involvement in various conflicts, I support and respect military personnel. The majority of them are diligent in adhering to and honoring the oath they took on entering the service.

My two brothers, two uncles, and a couple of cousins have served in, or retired from, various branches of the military.

I see a surprising number of young people serving in the Legislature this session, who probably were not around in 1973, so may not understand how things were then.

My oldest brother, Roger, was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. He initially was involved in troop transport, but asked to be assigned to Med Evac duties. He never said much about his time 'in country', but I remember one time he said that the chin bubble, the Plexiglas at his feet, was shot away. He had reason to be proud of the duties he performed there. When he came home in 1973, he was surprised and hurt by the reception of the American public. Vietnam veterans were reviled, despised, denied employment, sometimes spit upon, called 'baby killers', and were generally not respected or appreciated.

Things have changed a lot since the 70s. Today, service men and women in uniform are thanked for their service, treated to a meal or a cup of coffee, and are generally held in high regard. That is the way it should have been in 1973.

There is another difference as well. Most of the men who served in Vietnam were drafted and forced to serve, today's military personnel choose to serve.

This bill is what I call a "fuzzy, feel good" bill in that it gives the people who support and vote in favor of it a warm and fuzzy feeling that they did a good thing...kind of like when a person donates blood.

Other than the administrative costs to draft, present, hear, and take a bill through the process, and everyone's time, it doesn't cost the State any money so this type of bill is a win-win.

But, in this case, it is just a few weeks shy of being 38 years too late. It is like giving a couple a wedding present when their youngest child graduates medical school. What's the point at that late date?

This bill is a nice gesture, but an empty one that is too late for many Vietnam veterans like Rog, as he died in 2004.

Thank you.

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